

visit is to address the United Nations General Assembly, but Ahmadi-Nejad will have accomplished much more than that by the time he leaves. By opening its gates to this man's hateful ideology, Columbia University is allowing him to take full advantage of a golden opportunity to spread it and giving it a level of deference it, frankly, does not deserve.

It is one thing for a foreign leader, even one as disreputable as Ahmadi-Nejad, to visit the U.N. and remain confined to the grounds of the U.N. As a head of state, he is legally entitled to visit the United Nations. It is quite another to give a man who has referred to the United States as the "Great Satan" and who denies the Holocaust a coveted platform from which to speak.

Let's consider for a minute what Iran has said and done during his Presidency. Iran actively supports militias that undermine the rule of law and export weapons that are killing our U.S. soldiers and marines in Iraq. Iran is actively pursuing a nuclear program that puts it on a path toward possessing nuclear weapons. Iran is a state sponsor of terror. Iran supports proxies that are undercutting attempts to bring peace, reconciliation, and democracy to Lebanon. Ahmadi-Nejad has called for Israel, one of America's closest allies, to be wiped off the map. Iran supports proxies in Syria and Gaza that are actively trying to goad Israel into war and undercutting the efforts to facilitate peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Ahmadi-Nejad has denied that the Holocaust ever took place, calling it a myth. He even hosted a convention of Holocaust deniers.

It is hard to imagine any nation on earth that threatens U.S. interests and those of its allies much more than Iran. It is equally hard to imagine any greater American university of generations past inviting a world leader to its campus who supported groups that kill U.S. soldiers and marines. Think of the irony: Columbia University, home of the core curriculum that prizes an in-depth understanding of Western civilization and the free exchange of ideas, is bringing to its campus a state sponsor of terror. A school that rejected the ROTC in 2005 on the grounds that the "don't ask, don't tell" policy discriminated against gays now welcomes a man whose government reportedly executes them.

Whether Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad should be speaking at Columbia should not be the subject of a philosophical debate. He already rejected that debate by leading a regime which has chosen terrorism over reason and open dialog. Under Ahmadi-Nejad, the Iranian regime trains, funds, and exports terror. Defense Department sources tell us that explosively formed penetrators, the most lethal form of improvised explosive devices used against our forces in Iraq, are being manufactured in Iran.

I was heartened to see some common sense was injected into the Iranian

leader's visit when the New York City Police Department denied his request to visit Ground Zero and lay a wreath. Looking at Ahmadi-Nejad's record on terror, one wonders whether the wreath was meant to honor the victims of the World Trade Center attacks or its perpetrators.

I support the administration's approach to the Iranian nuclear program. Active diplomacy and ratcheting up international sanctions are, at this point, the best path forward. That said, diplomacy is only as effective as the credibility and potential force backing it up. The President, as Commander in Chief, is correct to preserve a broad spectrum of policy options in confronting the Iranian threat.

Some groups on the left, such as MoveOn.org, believe we should take military options off the table, then negotiate. Such an approach might make sense to the zealots on the far left, but it will not help us in our efforts to slow Iran's nuclear program. Why would Iran take us seriously if we negotiate with all carrots and no sticks? Why would they take us seriously when their hateful screeds against us and our allies are met with an invitation to join polite society's lecture circuit?

I will close by saying that I strongly support free speech. Free speech is a hallmark of democracy, a right afforded by Ahmadi-Nejad to his own people. There is a world of difference between not preventing Ahmadi-Nejad from speaking and handing a megalomaniac a megaphone and a stage to use it.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for 60 minutes until the hour of 3:10 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and Senator BYRD recognized for 25 minutes of the majority's time and the Republicans controlling the final portion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

IRAQ

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, a few days ago, Congress and the American public were treated to a sales job on Iraq that would have made any used car salesman proud. We heard the half-truths and rosy visions put forth by authoritative diplomats in dark suits and rib-

boned and starred generals in uniform, topped off by the pomp and circumstance of a well-rehearsed Oval Office speech. Visions were painted for us of a peaceful and prosperous oasis of democracy and stability in the turbulent geography of the Middle East, if only—and only if—our gallant soldiers stayed for just a little while longer to bring the dream to reality. Such a grand vision, of course, produced yet another new Bush administration slogan, "return on success," which fits very nicely on a bumper sticker for the back of the lemon this team of salesmen is trying to peddle.

Like any good used car salesman, the President insists that we take him up on his once-in-a-lifetime good deal, just as he has insisted, each and every time, that he needs a little more time for his war in Iraq. If we don't buy in once again, Iraq will descend into chaos, militias will commence with ethnic cleansing, terrorists will set up complexes from which to launch attacks on the United States, and Iran or Syria, or both, will develop nuclear weapons and invade Iraq on their way to Israel.

Mr. President, I suggest that we stop and take a little time to consider this offer, consider what was said and what was not said. It is long past time to lift the hood and kick the tires.

President Bush said in his speech that things were going so well in Iraq that the extra troops needed for the surge could begin returning home, as long as conditions continued to improve. In the only time line that he laid out, the President suggested that, subject to his fine print, the number of U.S. troops in Iraq might be reduced to 137,000 by July 2008. While that is certainly welcome news, it carefully neglects to mention that this reduction would still leave 7,000 more troops in Iraq than were present before the so-called "temporary surge" began in February 2007. Frankly, that is not much of a drawdown, given all the so-called "progress" in Iraq cited by the President.

The President said in 2003, "Mission accomplished." Now the President says that in December, it will be time to "transition to the next phase of our strategy in Iraq." the President said, and I quote, "As terrorists are defeated, civil society takes root, and the Iraqis assume more control over their own security, our mission in Iraq will evolve. Over time, our troops will shift from leading operations, to partnering with Iraqi forces, and eventually to overwatching those forces."

In 2003, over 4 years ago, when U.S. forces overthrew the regime of Saddam Hussein, there was supposed to be a rapid transition to a new civil government in Iraq. In all the years since the invasion, civil society has not yet put down strong roots despite our efforts. By every assessment and every benchmark, it is not happening now, either. The Iraqi central government is nowhere near achieving reconciliation,

and equitable arrangements for the sharing of oil revenue or holding elections are but dim and distant visions. Iraqis have not assumed control over their own security. Indeed, independent assessments of Iraq have suggested that Iraqi security forces are riddled with sectarian corruption and will not be capable of providing security for some time to come, if ever.

U.S. troops have been “partnering” with Iraqi troops for years now, and U.S. troops have been training, equipping and supporting Iraqi forces to the tune of billions of dollars. U.S. troops have been conducting counterterrorism operations, as the President also noted in his speech. So what, pray tell, is new or different about this strategy? I can see nothing by which to judge success so that our troops may “return on success.” It is just a nice paint job slathered across the same old junk car.

The warranties on this new speech and this new sales job expire as soon as the car is driven off the lot. The only timeline offered by President Bush or General Petraeus ran out of time after July 2008. The pretty six-colored chart that General Petraeus used to show the troop drawdown associated with the transition had no dates on it past July 2008, though it was pretty clear that U.S. troops would be in Iraq for a very long time to come. President Bush explicitly said that if he has his way, U.S. troops would be in Iraq long past his exit from the White House. He boldly asserts that he will leave his staggering foreign policy calamity for someone else to clean up. Talk about passing the buck.

Mr. President, we simply cannot afford another slick White House sales job. Too many young men and women have died or have been maimed in this horrific war. We owe it to them to take a good hard look at the facts. General Petraeus, in his testimony, suggested that because of the “surge,” the number of Iraqi deaths have decreased, indicating “progress.” That may or may not be true—I do not know—but I do know that General Petraeus carefully did not note that the number of U.S. deaths in Iraq actually increased during the surge period, compared to the same periods in prior years. General Petraeus also did not note that the U.S. military death rate in Iraq, that is, the average number of deaths per month, also continues to climb from prior years.

General Petraeus pointed to the decrease in the number of improvised explosive device, or IED, attacks during the surge period of June through August as another sign of progress. It is true that the number of attacks dropped—as it does every year during the very hottest months of June, July, and August. But what General Petraeus did not say is that the number of U.S. deaths from IEDs increased during the surge period, compared to the same period in prior years. That, as they say, is the rest of the story. That is the whole truth, not carefully cher-

ry-picked statistics designed to bolster the President's pitch for progress.

The President and his men also did not talk about the price tag of this shiny little war sedan. No need to discuss that before they have hooked us into writing the check. But the cost of this war should be uppermost in our minds, as the Senate addresses the Defense authorization bill, and certainly before the Senate considers yet another war funding supplemental appropriations bill—the largest one ever.

Congress has already appropriated over \$450 billion for the war in Iraq, and if Congress approves the President's latest request for supplemental funds, that figure will grow to over \$600 billion during fiscal year 2008. That is a price tag with nine zeroes in it, folks. These direct costs do not cover the many hidden, indirect costs of this war, such as higher Veterans Administration costs, more veterans' disability payments, the considerable interest on the additional debt, higher oil and gasoline prices, increased security costs here at home, and the incalculable damage done to our image and reputation in the world because of this war. The combined direct and indirect costs and obligations of this war will exceed \$1 trillion by the most conservative estimates. Many economists believe that the costs are much higher.

That \$600 billion or \$1 trillion pricetag also does not begin to cover the lost opportunity costs—all the ways in which money now spent on Iraq could have been used to make our bridges safer, secure our border, improve education, or to prepare for and rebuild after natural disasters and weather-related farming failures. That money could have been used to develop safe, clean, alternative energy sources so that the United States would not have to rely so much on oil from the Middle East or other volatile regions of the world.

Nor does that \$600 billion or \$1 trillion cover the costs of keeping upwards of 130,000 troops in Iraq for the many additional years the President and his men suggest will be necessary to achieve their vision of progress and success. It boggles the mind to consider the long-term costs of buying this war.

We all say that we support the troops. These brave men and women have been given a near impossible task, which they have performed with dedication, professionalism, courage, and honor. The Congress has provided everything the generals have asked for, and more. The President has taken that support for our men and women in uniform to imply support and even validation of his policy. He wants to keep the U.S. military tied down in Iraq indefinitely, trying to bargain for a little more time, a little more time, time and time again, never grasping that his policy is fatally flawed. History shows the fallacy of thinking that democracy can be force-fed at the point of a gun.

In the fifth year of this misguided, infernal war, I am convinced that the

best way to support our troops is to bring them home—home, sweet home—and the only way to get them home may be to somehow restrict the funds for this disastrous, awful war. We have tried this before and the President, the President, vetoed the bill. I am here today to insist that we must try again. Strings must be attached to this money. This Senator will support no more blank checks for Iraq.

On October 11, 2002, I was one of only 23 Senators who voted against the authorization that led to this awful, infernal war. I call on my colleagues, for the sake of our soldiers and for the sake of our Nation, to remember that half-truths and misleading claims are what led to this war. We can all recall that on February 5, 2003, the President sent Colin Powell, both a ribboned and starred general and a respected diplomat, to the United Nations to sell this war to the UN and to the Nation. Secretary Powell painted frightening visions of anthrax, truck and rail car-mounted mobile weapons laboratories, and nuclear weapons—none of it was accurate. The Nation was led to believe that our troops would be greeted as liberators, and that oil money would pay for Iraq's reconstruction. Now while the half-truths have changed, the strategy of misleading the Nation remains the same.

Iraq may descend further into chaos if U.S. troops leave now, or it may descend into chaos whenever they leave. As long as the United States keeps the peace in Iraq, there is no incentive for Iraqis to maintain the peace on their own. After nearly 5 years of this awful, terrible war, more than 3,800 deaths, over 27,000 wounded, and no end in sight, we must change course. This war, this draining, desultory, dreadful occupation of Iraq must end.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

COMMENDING SENATOR BYRD

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, before I begin my remarks, I must pay tribute to Senator BYRD. We are on different sides of the discussion on the Iraq war, but he is an extraordinary public servant who remains as full of not just passion, which is evident, but brainpower at a mature age, shall I say, as he was when he was a lot younger. It is a privilege to serve with him and to have listened to him.

IRANIAN REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on amendment No. 3017 which Senator KYL of Arizona and I have offered. This amendment would designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization and thereby subject this deadly, nefarious group to a series of economic and diplomatic sanctions that Senator KYL and I think will be felt in Iran and that this group, because of its